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MY ISLANDS

Mary Dillingham Frear

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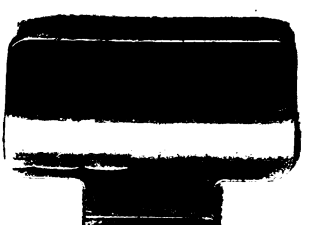

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MY ISLANDS

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CONCERNING THE READER

ONLY verse have I to offer.
Will he buy,
As gentle reader, or as scoffer
Pass me by
In the crowd? What can I proffer?
Who am I?

Only a friend of birds and flowers,
Butterflies,
Rainbows, shadows, moonbeams, showers.
Does he prize
Gleams and glooms of summer hours?
These he buys?

Just to show my wares a pleasure!
If a thought
Should escape with lilted measure
That he bought,
He may use it at his leisure,
Though unsought.

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MY ISLANDS

Verses

BY

MARY DILLINGHAM FREAR

AUTHOR OF THE COCOA PALM AND OTHER SONGS FOR CHILDREN

"We know the merry world is round,
And we may sail forevermore."
Tennyson.

NEW YORK
FRANK D. BEATTYS & CO.
1911

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TO

YOU, MY SPIRIT-KIN

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MY ISLANDS

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MY ISLANDS

On the edge of the world my islands lie,
Under the sun-steeped sky,
And their waving palms
Are bounteous alms
To the soul-spent passer-by.

On the edge of the world my islands dream,
Under the tender gleam
Of moon and star
That beckon far
From worlds that only seem.

On the edge of the world my islands sleep
In a slumber soft and deep.
What should they know
Of a world of woe
And myriad men that weep?

On the edge of the world my islands wake,
And their languid sleep forsake.
They long to live,
Their all to give,
And the work of the world partake.

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On the edge of the world, dear islands, stay,
Far from the clamorous day.
Content with calm,
Hold peace and balm,
Be Isles of the Blest for aye!

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LELE-ANAE

O MAIDEN waterfall that dar'st to leap
From out thy virgin fastness on the height,
To join thy mother in the valley deep,
Thou ne'er shalt reach her; for thy lover, Wind,
An unseen Cupid, thou his Psyche fair,
Waits not to ask thee if it be thy mind,
But, swift-embracing, seizes thee in flight
And makes thee one with the enfolding air.

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THE TRADE WIND

RUSTLE, red leaves on the mango tree;
The world is glad and my heart is gay;
The trade winds, faithful, strong and free,
Rustle red leaves on the mango tree,
Toy with the waves of the laughing sea,
And lift the hair of the child at play.
Rustle, red leaves on the mango tree!
The world is glad and my heart is gay.

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THE SOUTH WIND

THE wind is in the south to-day!
Ah, me! Ah, me!
I'm wishing me a league away!
The wind is in the south to-day
And mournfully doth sing his lay
The sea! The sea!
The wind is in the south to-day!
Ah, me! Ah, me!

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DIAMOND HEAD

LEAHI, wondrous Wreath of Fire!
  Leahi, hoary name!
'Twas lisped by grandsire's grandsire's sire
  Before his tribe was tame,
Yet none to him gave legend dire
  Of ashes or of flame.

Long centuries have dawned and passed,
  All silent of the life
That in a moment's fitful blast
  Thy being rent in strife;
Yet in thy stones the tale was cast
  When Hell took thee to wife.

Leahi, is thy passion dead?
  Ah, no, Protectress thou:
A later lover thy proud head
  With fire hath crowned. Thy vow—
The seas to fill with molten lead
  Ere him thou'lt disavow!

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IN HAWAII

FIND here the balm of beauty,
And the cool caress of wind
  That knows no snows,
  Nor boist'rous blows,
But whispers soft and kind.

Find here the palm of poetry,
Find here the land of song;
  Pluck thee a flower
  For royal dower,
And to thyself belong.

Find here the calm of search-end;
The lotus eat; forget
  The world-old sorrows,
  The blind to-morrows,
The hurry, care, and fret.

Beneath the palm of poetry,
In the balm of beauty's spell,
  Through the calm and peace
  Of woe's surcease,
Thy psalm of life shall swell.

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NIGHT-BLOOMING CEREUS

THE night is fair,—too fair for us to stay
Close-curtained from the soft and radiant light.
We wander forth to breathe the sweet sea-breeze,
Where on the road the shadows of the palms
Make soundless music as we slowly pass,
By gentle swaying.
Look you, what is this?
Is this a banquet for the gods outspread
Upon this gray and lichen-covered wall?
The knotted, creeping cactus lies loose-flung
Upon the lava-stones. Upon it stand
A thousand glistening goblets, flared at brim,
Uplifted to the moon. The cups of white
Are set on scaly necks of grayish green;
And trembling in their lustrous, lip-curved bowls
Is scented gold? nay;—amber wine? nay, nay,
'Tis rather moonlight trapped, or odor visible.

Ah, goblets rare, I know that when the light
Shall come at morn, ye shall be overturned,
And drained of all the glory of to-night.

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KAMAO

Oh let the skylark thrill the list'ning plain,
The nightingale romantic woo the rose,
The wilding thrush from me my heart has ta'en,
And he my rapture knows!

The joy of living! I could voice it never;
His utterance—melodious, gushing, clear,
Free and ecstatic,—I could list forever.
It is my heart I hear!

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TO HALEMANU

"HOME of the Birds!" how sheltered thou
  Dost nestle 'mid the enfolding hills;
  Beyond the strife of human wills,
Unknowing souls that cringe and bow.

Yonder, the awesome cliffs among,
  Wheels the Koae, the tropic-bird;
  Leaps the lithe goat; afar are heard
Wild echoes through the canyon flung.

Deep in the forest sings the stream;
  The thrush calls wooingly his love;
  Winds slumber; the calm sky above
Completes the circle of a dream.

Ah, Halemanu, wood-nest rare!
  Our fledgling thoughts wing back to thee;
  For, high above the restless sea,
The birds of peace are brooding there.

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OUR ISLAND EASTER

How can I know that spring is come
  When all the year is green,
When bursting bud and tender leaf
  In every month are seen?

Nor ever icy, muffling hands
  Upon the brook are laid,
That daily sings as sing the birds
  Within the woodsy glade?

It is not measured of the eye;
  It is unheard of ear.
The surging sap the heart perceives
  And knows that spring is here.

The new leaves come, the old leaves fall,
  Nor naked stands the bough,
As growth, indeed, the soul acquires,
  Only the soul knows how.

Arise, O Lord of life, in me!
  Unseen, build me anew;
Let strength to strength, and grace to grace,
  Prove resurrection true!

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IN THE TANTALUS FOREST

THOU hast risen, Eucalyptus,
From a dank and mouldy soil;
Thou hast struggled for the sunlight,
Thou hast towered by lusty toil;
But no contact with thy fellows
Could thy heart of hearts despoil.

O thou stately Eucalyptus,
How I love thine odorous balm!
Thou dost heal me, mind and body,
As thou sing'st thy leafy psalm.

At thy foot, among lush grasses
And the spreading fans of palm,
I am lying, blest and blessing,
In a spirit-lifting calm.

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BEYOND THE HARBOR GATE

(DIAMOND HEAD)

BEYOND the harbor gate there lies
A sheeted figure gravely gray,
Or softly splendent 'neath the play
Of shifting light from tropic skies.
An effigy in stone, with face
Toward morning's promise still upraised,
Its taskless hands in folded grace
Are careless now, or blamed or praised.
Such lines of peace by time are wrought.
Away with wearying, worrying thought!

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ON THE TRAIL

Oh, ride with me breast-high amid the jasmine,
And touch the cool, green leaves and scent the bloom,
Inhaling breaths that lift us, high and holy,
Into a life where peace and joy find room!

Ah, let us linger there until the cadence
Of day the distant city glorifies:
Then, turning, watch from night's pale, silver dawning
O'er yon blue mountain-top, the moon arise!

Dear, what if thy life-sun has sunk before thee?
Will not a moonrise break thy spirit's gloom?
Come, ride with me, breast-high amid the jasmine,
And touch the healing leaves and scent the bloom.

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Over the vast of ocean's trackless blue,
Beneath the steep Sierras' lofty pines,
Across the desert drear, and lonely mines,
The sea of salt, the prairies,—ah, 'tis due,—
A message comes from loyal sons of Yale
In far Hawaii, "Hail, O Mother, hail!"

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ON THE SHORE

A LITTLE empty cradle
  Is lying on the shore.
I've seen many pretty cradles,
  Never one so sweet before.
But this rose-lined, sea-shell cradle
  Lies empty on the shore.

The tide brings bits of seaweed,
  Other toys, a score of things;
The waves are rocking, rocking,
  The ocean-mother sings;
But the empty sea-shell cradle,
  In vain, in vain it swings!

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TO A HEDGE OF NIGHT-BLOOMING CEREUS

Like myriad moons found sleeping
On a river's tranquil breast;
Like a flock of snowy pigeons
At even sunk to rest;

Like the ivory gold-filled caskets
Of a Persian miser's hoard;
Like the goblets Hebe carries
At Olympian banquet board;

Like giant pearls refulgent,
In a golden fretwork placed,
Fit for a bride's adorning,
On rich embroideries traced;

Peaceful as lotus lilies
On a sacred pool of glass;
Pure as the clouds of summer,
Across the blue that pass;

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Deep as the heart's own secrets;
  Still as a soul in prayer;
Stifling with passionate fragrance
  Filling the ambient air;

Blest as the saints in glory,
  Radiant, crowned, and free;
Ah, thus, Night's Queen of Flowers,
  Flood visions bright of thee!

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ALOHA

NEEDS must there be in every tongue,
Or roughly spoke, or sweetly sung,
A word of common greeting
That beareth oft repeating.

Bon dia, sayonara, or farewell,—
Spoke lightly, deeply, who can tell?
Adieu, good-bye, auf wiedersehn,—
The words are memory's refrain.

Aloha, dearest of them all,—
What pictures doth it not recall?
What tender tones in telling!
What sentiments upwelling!

Aloha,—'tis a loving-cup;
With what thou wilt, thou fill'st it up.
A common dole to many lips,
Or chalice rare; one drinks or sips,
With love athirst or sated,
Sometimes with breath abated.

Thou send'st me thine aloha, friend;—
From heart-deceptions, heaven forfend!

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A FAREWELL

FAREWELL to purpling vale and cloud-kissed peak,
To shore of pearl engirt by opal sea,
To rainbows that reward the souls who seek!
O tropic isles,
Ye are God's smiles!
I thank him on devoutest knee,
He bids ye of his joy and love to tell.
Farewell!

But list, the isles reply, though voiceless they,
O stranger, with the vision in thine eyes,
Thy spirit shall abide with us for aye.
Here Beauty reigns serene,
And he who crowns her queen,
Her lover, lives in paradise,
Or near or far, in palace or in cell.
Farewell!

To say farewell is not to grieve nor sigh
That yesterday cannot to-morrow be.
To say farewell, to bid a long good-bye,
It is to breathe a prayer
Upon the enfolding air
For blessing in entirety;
That each in God's own good may ever dwell.
Farewell!

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EASTER MORNING

Ah, thou silver trumpet, Calla,
Breathe again that silent note!
Round my senses, as a fragrance,
Let thy soundless music float.
Love, pure, deathless, all-triumphant,
Singeth from thy golden throat.

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MEASURING-CUPS

God poureth truth and sunlight
As a flood of golden wine;
To each his measure, so hold up
Yours, little neighbor Buttercup,
And I will hold up mine.

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THE RACE

A SUNBEAM and a shower ran a race
Once on a day.
One chased the other o'er a little face,
Whose, I'll not say.
A rainbow glistened on the eyes downcast,
A smile flashed out; sunbeam had won at last,
And April changed to May!

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WHILES

I LISTEN in vain for a voice most sweet
  And a laugh with a merry ring:
There's never a glimmer of bare, white feet,
  And the grass grows under the swing.

The star-bestrewn hills were so bright with dew!
  They are brown. Under brooding wing
Wee birdlings were nestled. They grew and flew;
  Ah, the grass grows under the swing!

O stars, illumine my tear-dimmed eyes!
  Teach me, O birds, to sing!
Help me, O hills, to be heavenly-wise,
  For the grass grows under the swing!

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ALWAYS

WHAT matter to-night if winds are chill,
  What matter to-night if rains are drear?
My loving mother holds me still,
  Enfolded in her arms so dear.

What matter to-night if skies are fair?
  My mother lies upon her bier;
If balm infuses all the air?
  Only her lifeless clay is here.

Nay, winds are chill or winds are warm,
  But the mother-spirit, pure and bright,
The mother-soul keeps all from harm,
  Enfolds me this and every night.

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THE COMING STORM

THERE is storm in the air; from the south is
the word,
And the message portends that the deep deeps are
stirred.
The mountain is hiding its head in a mist,
As a nun all modestly wrapped in her veil,
Or a bride at the altar, shy, tremulous, pale,
A tremulous bride, too shy to be kissed.

There is hush in the air, like the hush after death;
Nay, rather the fate-freighted, birth-bringing
breath,
In-drawn in agony, out-breathed in power,—
All existence explained by the worth of this hour.
A hush, then a sound o'er the deep-swelling main,
Full-gushing, large-dropping, as tears relax pain,
And the storm is upon us. Ah, Heaven-sent rain!

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HEARTSEASE

DIDST ever think whence came the pansy, mild
And tender flower, our heartsease sweetly named?
Bearing almost the likeness of a child,
Fair-featured, softly curved, and with its eye
Now sunward raised in glee, or now, for rest,
In slumber closed, upon the old Earth's breast?

'Twas long ago,—yes, æons far away
In time. The Earth was then accounted gray.
The frosts of centuries had seamed her face,
And ages piled the snows of mountain-birth
Upon her bosom. But no stormy seas
Nor burning suns, nor stony grasp of ice
Had changed the loving heart of Mother Earth.

Each op'ning spring saw clustering round her knees
New beauties in the vernal forest deep.
And, 'mong the sportive creatures of the wood,
Men's children gamboled free and blithe and gay;
And when was closed for them life's little day,
They nestled in her bosom, lulled to sleep.

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The ages passed of peaceful springs and snows,
And ages came, by sin and sorrow cursed.
The limpid lakes no longer showed to heaven
The image undefiled, that God had given,
When man stooped down to slake in them his
thirst.

For blurred and broken was the image now.
And Earth, recoiling from a blow, in wrath
Inflicted on his fellow by a man,
Had found a stain of blood across her brow.

Forgetful of her tender, clinging vines,
Nor minding forest giants, once her pride,
She felt alone the breath of scorching plains
That seared the saplings thrusting through
the sod;
She felt alone the thorns that pierced her side.

The Earth lay prostrate in her agony.
"O God," she cried, "behold, I writhe in pain;
An evil demon hath destroyed my peace;
The garden is a wilderness become.
Behold, O God, behold the bloody stain!
Hast thou no token of forgiving love?"

As silently as Night gives birth to Morn,
So God from heaven let fall a pitying tear.
It cooled the Earth's wild, fever-throbbing pulse;
It mingled with the purple blot of sin;
And in that very hour was heartsease born.

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THE LITTLE BROWN ROCKER

THREE score years and ten have vanished
Since our mother's mother, rocking,
Nursed her tend'rest hopes, while rocking
In the low brown rocking-chair.

Childhood memories come knocking,
Pictures sweet and true unlocking,
Of our mother, also rocking,
Singing, rocking, singing there.

Over leagues of restless ocean,
Leagues of years, this heirloom, rocking,
Holds the past and present, rocking
Memories and dreams most fair.

May the dreams be never mocking,
Dreams of little children, flocking
To the future mother rocking
In the dear old rocking-chair.

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SPRING

HEART of mine, plough up my brain,
Sow it with pure desire.
Pray Heaven's blessing, as sun and rain,
To bring fair buds from the mire,
Clustering blossoms of sympathy,
That courage and hope suspire.

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MOUNT SHASTA

O HIGH-BROWED Shasta, neighbor to the sky,
In majesty alone above the hills,
What has thy kind to do with petty ills?
Repose and calm upon thy summits lie.
Thy noble front doth life and fate defy.
Cloud-wreathed and yet austere in dignity,
Hast thou no lines of sweet benignity,
For human crowds that hurry on to die?
Beholding thee, who thinks of fires long dead,
Where now thine ice-born rivers flow away?
Who dreams of passion centuries ago
And throbbing heart beneath thy hoary head?
Unmindful of the summer's fiercest ray,
Upon thy barren bosom sleeps the snow.

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QUESTIONS

WHAT can the joy of speech reveal
To lips that ne'er were dumb?
What vigor mean, unto an arm
By weakness never numb?
How can the peace of shore be felt,
Unbruised by wave or tide?
How can the depths of life be known,
Unless that one has died?

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PSYCHE

LITTLE she recks of the triple brute,
Cerberus though he be.
Wonder-lit eyes by their soul-speech mute
Utter the mystery
Temptingly sweet in the lid-shut prize.
Fearless of gruesome things,
Treads she unscathèd where phantoms rise,
Glad in her god-given wings.
What though the casket so rich and rare
Hold but the sleep of death?
What though no kindly, celestial air
Succor her parting breath?
Thrilled by the power of love, shall she
Waken to immortality.

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THE SLEEPING CHRIST-CHILD

THE Christ-Child sleeps upon his mother's knee,
His garments loose, his head in soft repose
Upon his chubby arm. Across his robe
A budding thorn-weed lies, but touches not
His flesh. Within his hand an op'ning rose
Of silken petals tenderly is clasped.
His baby feet are dimpled, bare and white;
Ah, must it be, that they at last shall tread
The weary, blood-tracked steeps of Calvary?
About his golden hair a halo rests,
Prophetic of an endless reign of light.
His lips are trembling almost into smiles,
But not the sort we see in baby dreams.
The joy of Him is one for smiles too deep.
The dusky lashes curtain close the eyes
Ere long to gaze in pain too great for tears.

Sweet Infant, sleep! Upon Thy mother's knee
Relax the form that soon shall know no rest.
The roses clasp, for when Thine hands are grown
The thorns will pierce them, as they take the
crown
Humanity will offer unto Thee.
Sweet Infant, sleep, the while a universe
With bated breath awaits Thy waking power.
Sleep on, till God Himself shall waken Thee.

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TO A SKYLARK

THOU, lark, hast found a pathway new,
By angels never trod,
  And fearless, high
  Doth scale the sky
And sing thy song to God.

Thou art an earth-born chorister,
Yet dost to heaven belong.
  Dare I to sing?
  Dare I to bring
To God my gift of song?

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SONG-POOLS

KNOWETH the lark where the song-pools lie,
  Stoopeth and drinketh his fill.
Afterward poureth from vaulted sky
  Melody, rapture-athrill.
Where lie the pools of his ecstasy?
  Nest-nigh, crest-high on the hill!

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REST IN EGYPT

In the lone Egyptian desert
  Paused the infant Christ in flight.
And the questions of the ages
  Found their answer in the light
Shining round Him:—light that banished
  Gloom of Egypt, paled the stars,
Yea, dimmed e'en the lurid glory
  Of the war-encrimsoned Mars.

There was peace on earth most precious
  While, against the Sphinx's breast,
Adamant, the weary mother
  And the Christ-Child lay at rest.
Grew that heart of stone no warmer,
  Shed that fixed eye no tear,
At the tender human touching,
  Bringing God Himself so near?

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CHINA

THE sleeper was old, as they thought,
And mad. He turned in his sleep
With a groan and a curse.
And his bones,—how they rattled with age!
Ah, thus had the centuries wrought
Their will! The sound made us weep.
Then they caught at his purse;
"Here is gold! Let us make him a cage,
And his heritage
Let us keep."

There were struggling and blows in the room.
The man—they declared him wild,
And with iron they bound
Him, and caged him before they were done.
Then silence ensued like the tomb.
Through the bars looked a visage mild,
With a wonder profound
And a smile like the rising sun.
The awakened one
Was a child.

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THE PASSING GIFT

THIRSTING and worn, a pilgrim
  Sank by a moss-grown wall;
High overhead the clustering grape
  Nodded its branches tall.

There in the restful shadow,
  Breath as of angel fair
Stole o'er the weary pilgrim's brow,
  Scented the lifeless air.

Started the pilgrim, wond'ring
  Whence was the fragrance sweet.
The grape-vine shading the moss-grown wall
  Tenderly touched his feet.

Gone was the shy, rare perfume;
  And the pilgrim went his way;
But the joy of the grape-vine's passing gift
  Abides in his heart to-day.

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MIRAGE

At last!—O God, my thanks,—the lake at last!
The desert over,—almost over, now;
My weary feet and parchèd lips endure
Until thou givest them their long reward.
At last to rest upon the pebbly beach,
To lave my limbs,—to drink! Can I endure?
There shines, in truth, the gleaming, silver lake;
I see the fair reflection of the shore.
The palms, inverted, bathe their heads as I—
I, too, most happy, soon shall bathe my own.
The islets sleep upon that placid breast
So cool and gray, despite the glare of noon.
The glare and glimmer of these desert sands,—
They blind me? nay, for naught of pain can dim
The eye that sees that welcome goal, the lake.
There ships, and there a towered city,—lo,
My brain reels from the madd'ning solitude
Of the wild desert I have plodded o'er.
My throbbing eyelids close; now let me dream
The taste of water—what could Heaven
be more?
But why delay? Let me not faint until
I gain thee, loved and longed-for, God-given lake!
My eyelids lift; I strain my eyes. What! Where?
The desert only? God! Mirage! I die!

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HER CENTENARY

To-day the century-plant of years
Has bloomed in honor of her birth,
Our Heart's-belovèd. Have we tears
That she no longer treads the earth,
This blossom rare to pluck and prize?
Dispel, ye mists that dim and blur
The vision radiant of her
Who culls the flowers of Paradise!
What are the centuries to one
Who notes the wheeling of the sun
As but a toy? The timeless day,
Eternity—what is it, pray?

Ah, time may cease, and space, but yet
Her love that bore, that brooded long,
That turned earth-sorrows into song,
Her love cannot her loved forget;
And, drifting through th' encircling air,
In softest touch on cheek or brow,
Or light caressing of the hair,
We feel her hallowing presence now.

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A VALENTINE TO ——?

I CANNOT now recall the day
When first I gazed upon thy form,
Nor yet when first thy small hand lay
Enfolded close in mine and warm.
We loved each other from the first,
And though I sometimes chide thee sore,
I promise thee, though worse be worst,
I ne'er will turn thee from my door.
If ever thou shouldst leave me, Elf,
I straight should be beside myself.
If ever thou shouldst from me fly,
I could no less than quickly die.
Yet, love thee though I do, thy face
Will never look on mine in grace!

Save that the mirror, thin disguise,
Makes medium betwixt our eyes!

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MEASURE FOR MEASURE

MEASURE for measure! How full the years!
Measure for measure of smiles and tears.
Rich, the treasure of love and youth,
Richer, time's measure of honor and truth.
Who would empty the cups again?
Empty of pleasure or empty of pain?
Bitter and sweet:—'tis life's rare wine;
Something of earthliness,—something divine!

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ABSENCE

Not there! 'Tis the accustomed place,
Yet desolate of her.
I seek in vain her path to trace,
But tears my vision blur.
I cannot know how far may be
Her way across the sapphire sea;
Enough; I miss her from her chair.
She is not there!

Gone is her image, yet abides,
Heart-deep, her presence still;
Untouched by time, unmoved by tide,
It sets my pulse athrill!
A mystery of love and joy,
A bitter-sweet that cannot cloy!
She is not there? She is not near?
Ah,—she is here!

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RECALLED

CHILD, thou hast beckoned back my feet
From fields of asphodel,
Unheeding seraph music sweet,
This word to tell.

Know, that of earth's or heaven's powers,
Below, around, above,
Naught satisfies while it devours
Like mother-love.

I hug the torture to my breast,
Thy bitter need of me.
My paradise? God's large bequest,—
My love for thee!

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ANÆSTHESIA

SOFTLY to sleep in the hollow of God's hand,—
Perhaps to waken soon and understand
His holy way.
Perhaps to dream again the dream of life,
To feel its pain of struggle, fear and strife,
Perhaps to slumber till the night of years
Is past, and, dawning radiant, appears
The perfect day.

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TO A SEWING-BIRD

Sing, little bird, of the long ago,
When our little-girl-grandmothers used to sew;
Sing, little sewing-bird, sing;
Large of mouth and silver of wing; sing!
Stitch after stitch of the long white seam,
The end in your mouth so you could not scream,
Impatient, nor warble, nor sing,
Screwed to the table,—now little bird, sing!

Had they time to dream, so long ago,
Our little-girl-grandmothers, learning to sew?
Work was in plenty, and toys were few,
But you were a tool and a plaything, too;
Stand on your crimson cushion and sing,
Little sewing-bird, sing!

Hand over hand on the hem or the seam,
Yes, there was many an hour to dream;
But which of their dreams have ever come true?
I know not, little bird, do you?
Little sewing-bird of the silver wing,
Sing, bird, sing!

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SWEET PEAS IN SEPTEMBER

'Tis true they've gone to seed.
It seems but yesterday
Since these, now withered on the stalk,
Were blooming bright and gay.

Poor things! Well, let them be,
They've had their time to grow;
A little while and they will lie
Forgotten 'neath the snow.

Nay, cease your senseless words.
Forgotten they'll not be.
You say they've gone to seed, and yet
You have no eyes to see.

The flowers, true, are gone,
But every ripened pod
Gives promise of new, stirring life,
Beneath the next spring sod.

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Alas for you and me,
  If, when we've gone to seed,
We've left no hope of future good
  Bound up in word or deed.

The flowers may fade away,
  Our graces may depart,
But neither they nor we are dead,
  Unless we're dead at heart.

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A JUNE DAY

BUBBLING, bubbling, fast and free,
Are the springs of the song-bird's song.
Deaf is the ear that cannot hear
The sound of its gushing, sweet and clear,
The flowing of joyous melody
That bubbles the whole day long.

Glowing, glancing, green and gold,
Are the haunts of the lover bird.
Blind is the eye that cannot see
All nature in her ecstasy,
The wooing lights of wood and wold
That win with never a word.

Holy, holy, field and tree
And river and rock and sod.
Dead is the heart that cannot feel
The vision whirl, the senses reel,
Thrilled with the blessed mystery
Of the presence of nature's God!

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THE BANQUET BOARD

I SAT me down at Life's banquet board,
The linen lustre-white,
And many goblets from her hoard
She brought me, burnished bright.

"Now free art thou to choose," said she,
"The cup which I shall fill;
Yet, choosing, harken unto me:
Drink all, nor leave, nor spill.

"The taste upon the foaming brim
Not always prophesies;
The bitter, hidden from the rim,
In dregs full often lies.

"The cup of pleasure, gilded o'er,
When deeply thou shalt drain,
May hold a drop of wormwood more
Than e'en the cup of pain!

"The cup of sin thou canst not touch
Without a crimson stain:
Or sipping only, drinking much,
Beware the mark of Cain!

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"The cups of youth, of fame, of joy,
Thou choosest well, but know
That even these will ofttimes cloy,
Oft hold the lees of woe.

"The cup of love,—take thou but this,
And, with thy failing breath,
Thou tastest naught but heavenly bliss
Within the cup of death!"

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IN MINOR STRAIN

FALL, little flower,
  And where thou fallest, lie.
Thou knowest not the meaning
  Of the solemn words *to die;*
Thy life an hour of beauty,
  Thy death a fragrant sigh,
O little flower, what matters it
  To thee, to live or die?

Throb, little heart,
  And when thy throbbing's o'er,
Take thou the rest awaiting thee
  Where sorrows are no more.
Thy life a noble struggle,
  Thy death a glad release,—
Ah, little heart, what rapture rare
  To die and be at peace!

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SOUL-SERVICE

Souls there may be
That live imprisoned birds to free;—
A service sweet,
But incomplete.
Souls there are
That gleam afar,
Like some deep-set refulgent star,
Dim-sighted ones to guide and bless
With other-worldliness.
Mayhap a stranger-soul beneath thy roof
Gives Heaven proof.
An inspiration stirs the air;
Life becomes fair;
Sleeping emotions wake to words,
Sweet actions follow like meek herds,
And, cage-doors opened, thoughts like birds
Outward fly
Toward the sky.

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MY SINGING GROVE

I PLANTED me a singing grove,
  Ah, long and long ago!
Before my heart had hoary grown
  A thousand years or so.

A thousand years of dying dreams,
  Of stimulating pain,
A thousand years of bitter tears,
  Of loss and fruitless gain.

A thousand years! What suns and storms
  My grove had given tongue!
What matins and what vesper songs
  Ineffably had sung!

To-day I sought my singing grove
  With sad and chastened mind;
Its deep-toned psalm was healing balm,
  So merciful, so kind!

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BEFORE

COULD I but slip the latch of dull Routine,
And fly her House of Care, far, far away
From out the roar of jarring voices here,
On wings of emprise would my soul be borne,
Beneath the starry midnight, through the dawn,
Between the sunset bars, or at high noon,—
It matters not, so I were no more slave
To her Convention names Reality.
In dreams my mistress hath appeared to me:
Her name is Beauty,—long my worship true,—
And her I'd seek through wilderness of worlds,
And prove that I could drink her draught of life.

I hear her calling clear above the din
Of human hindrance. Stronger than desire
The force that thrills, that fills, nor lets me stay!
Now must I slip the latch and wing away!

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AFTERWARD

My soul is drenched with beauty, as a moth
Enchanted by the glamour of the sea,
Slow-circling in the ambient twilight hour
Above the glistening sands, by rosy waves
Is caught and lured beneath the laughing foam.
Its too incautious wing is powerless
To cope with its environs, limpid, deep.
But now in sport, if not in scorn, behold
A billow lifts and leaves the moth far up
The sloping margin. Passive there it lies
Until, at last, as moved by vague unrest,
It folds its wings, unfolds and folds again.

So sits my soul, escaped from beauty's thrall
By just so much of grace as takes not life;
And, dreaming sweet, far, unforgotten things,
Dumbly it folds, unfolds and folds its wings.

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THE DRY STREAM-BED

THERE'S a stream in my garden; it does not flow
Except in the winter, twice or so,
When a cloud-burst sends a rushing flood,
Like a maiden's tingling, blushing blood,
Across the face of our garden space.

There are tears in my heart, but they do not fall,
Do not rise to my trembling lids at all,
Till a heart-burst comes of love or pain.
Ah, the tears that fall like a winter rain,
Gushing and free! Glad relief to me!

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PRAISE

No less the grass sings than the bird,
Only by fewer is it heard;
And every raindrop says a grace,
Falling to its appointed place.

What think you of the germ that slays?
Is it another form of praise?

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EVOLUTION

My brother stone lies sleeping,
Deep sleeping under sod.
Shall he and I awake one day
In likeness unto God?
Who says, "He sleeps forever,
But I shall sleep to wake,"
Counts not the steps of sharp ascent
That flesh to soul must take.
From stone to waving grasses,
From meadow flower to man,
From man to God,—oh, vain desire
The universe to span
By mortal mind! But let us
Climb humbly to the light;
For lo! the stone rejected
Is precious in His sight.

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INTERPRETATION

THE common light of every day
  Falls on a waiting world;
To common winds, or east or west,
  Yon sails are set or furled;
From out the common arching blue
  The thunderbolts are hurled.

But to the turret watcher high
  How manifold the views!
The prism knows light's secret
  Of a thousand thousand hues.
The lightning and the wind effect
  What master-mind may choose.

Ah, sorrow is a common thing—
  As common as the day;
And fortune blows, as blow the winds,
  A common, fickle sway;
And death falls, like the thunderbolt,
  Upon the common way.

Take turret, Soul! In wisdom hold
  Love's prism to thine eye;
Let this be thine interpreter
  In earth and sea and sky;
Then all-courageous, spread thy wings,
  What winds may blow, to try!

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MY GIFT

God gave to me a sealèd prize,
Marked "Grief. It is thine own."
Foot-spurned, it lay;
I turned away,
My heart already stone.

At last, "It is God's gift!" I cried,
Broke seal, and therein found
The golden key
Of sympathy
To mysteries profound.

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ASSURANCE

'Twas yester eve an avalanche
  Entombed the flowery mead;
Beneath a glacier, here am I,
  A germinating seed.

It will not be the morrow's sun
  I'll greet above the snow;
But what's a thousand years? Mine hour
  For bloom will come, I know!

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MY CHALICE

THE chalice of my day is filled
With golden wine from happy hours,
Slowly and tenderly distilled
As dew from honey-holding flowers.

The measure brims with fancies bright,
It sparkles with remembrance sweet;
But, warming, cheering, full of light,
One drop of sorrow makes replete

My draught of day. A bitter hour
Was needed, thus to clarify
The mead, and give a quickening power.
Grateful, I lift my chalice high.

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A DOOR

Beside a camper's trail I chanced to see,
Discarded from an over-heavy load
And waiting prone and all indifferently
Until a shoulder strong should bear it hence,
A door,—an ordinary door of wood.

I paused and looked upon that thing so dumb,
A wooden door. Mutely it spake to me
Of much pertaining unto life indeed.
So common was it! Stuff of cheapest pine,
And one of million millions made by rule.
Can individuality have place
Where roars the wheel of soulless circumstance,
A factory of crudity and law?
No careful brain and hand shaped part to part;
A fault in grain or cure may warp induce;
The door itself can utter no complaint.
And yet, when all is said and all is done,
Its purpose and its place in life are sure.
Where'er it find a hinge it is a door;
Open or closed, a symbol eloquent
Of much unspoken. Opportunity!
A common door,—but it may make or mar
A destiny,—mayhap or yours or mine!

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AFFINITY

A LONG procession passeth by
  Beside the boundless sea:
A motley throng thou dost descry
  That moveth ceaselessly.
But on one pilgrimage are they;
  Unknowing, one their goal.
One impulse breathing through their clay,
  Their wand'rings doth control.

Albeit to each thou bidst God-speed,
  Few step within thy door,—
Thy spirit-kinsmen; few, indeed,
  But thine forevermore.
Nor time nor place may move them hence;
  Though seeming distance hide,
Still, soul in soul can plumb pretense,—
  Thy spirit-kin abide.

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